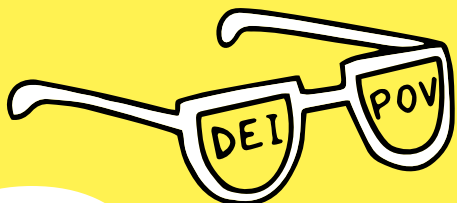


BEBS:
Building Equity-Based Summers
Workbook



Building Equity- Based Summers

Re-imagining and
Designing Library Services
with Your Community



Why equity

Working towards equity honors diversity and creates space for inclusion in all library services.

Why center library services in equity?

- Equity is foundational. Only on a bedrock of equity are library staff able to build and encourage strong and vibrant communities.
- Equity serves everyone. Libraries are one part of a greater community ecosystem which includes systemically marginalized youth, families, and adults.
- Equity requires sharing power. It's crucial that individuals from systemically marginalized groups have opportunities to bring their unique lived experiences to the design and delivery of community-based services.
- Equity embraces shared humanity and basic rights. Social justice and liberation require equity-based solutions.

Library staff goals are clear:

- As public servants, staff must center community needs over the desires of libraries and staff.
- Staff must focus on solutions, not problems. [See Subramaniam, et al.](#)

There are many aspects of summer library services that require attention to equity. Processes to re-think include: budgeting, program registration, performer and speaker hiring, programming activities, incentives, marketing and promotion, and collection development. When library staff apply a traditional cookie-cutter approach to summer services or when staff don't operate with an equitable mindset, those who could benefit the most are often left-behind. Rigid registration and completion restrictions, for example, tend to limit participation.

Working towards equity honors diversity and creates space for inclusion in all library services.

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Session 3

Connecting with Community Voices



Introduction

Connecting with community voices requires active listening, ongoing relationship building, moving away from transactional partnerships towards relational partnerships, power sharing, and giving up control. When library staff authentically connect with community voices, community members from neighborhoods, groups, and organizations who do not take part in library summer services are a part of the design, implementation, and assessment of those services. It's a process that takes patience and may require moving beyond obstacles such as time, resources, job descriptions, and so on.

Without embedding community voices into equitable summer services design and implementation, true equity will never be achieved.

It's All About Relationships

Relationships are at the core of equity-based summer services. Building relationships that go beyond those traditionally forged (schools, parks and rec, etc.) take time as trust is foundational to truly engage in equity work.

Library staff can start building these trusting relationships by:

- **Talking to colleagues who are already connected** to systematically marginalized communities and who are able to provide insights as well as act as brokers between the library and community members. Remember, you don't have to be the one to build and maintain the relationship. Instead, you can focus on providing the support needed to build a trusting relationship.
- Moving away from a focus on what the library can do for systemically marginalized communities to a **focus on learning about the communities themselves**. What are their strengths? What do they like to do? What would they like to have available in the community? Library staff can take the answers to questions like these and think about how to foster strengths identified and build summer services that help to meet and overcome challenges.
- **Being genuinely interested in the people you are talking with**. You can do this by asking about the person and not only focusing on the organization the person works for, the job the person does, and so on. Ask about the person's weekend or recent vacation. Ask about what they most recently read or watched on TV. While these questions may sometimes seem uncomfortable, they are a way to get to know someone else. Remember that you should answer the same questions for yourself. Have a conversation, not just an interview.
- **Recognizing that no two communities are the same** and that a one-size fits all approach to equity-based summer services is not possible. Instead learn about each community and then design with community partners services that reflect what was identified.
- It's likely that even if every community is different in some way, that all communities want to achieve similar goals. For example, it's possible that every community you serve wants to make sure that youth are able to participate in engaging activities over the summer. **Work towards the mutual goal for all communities** in your area, however, target the services to the specific strengths and challenges of the communities served.
- **Buy the coffee**. When you meet with someone you want to show that you appreciate their time and interest. Appreciation can come from saying thank you and by buying a cup of coffee for the person (or people). If coffee isn't available, think about other ways you can show your appreciation at the time of the meeting.

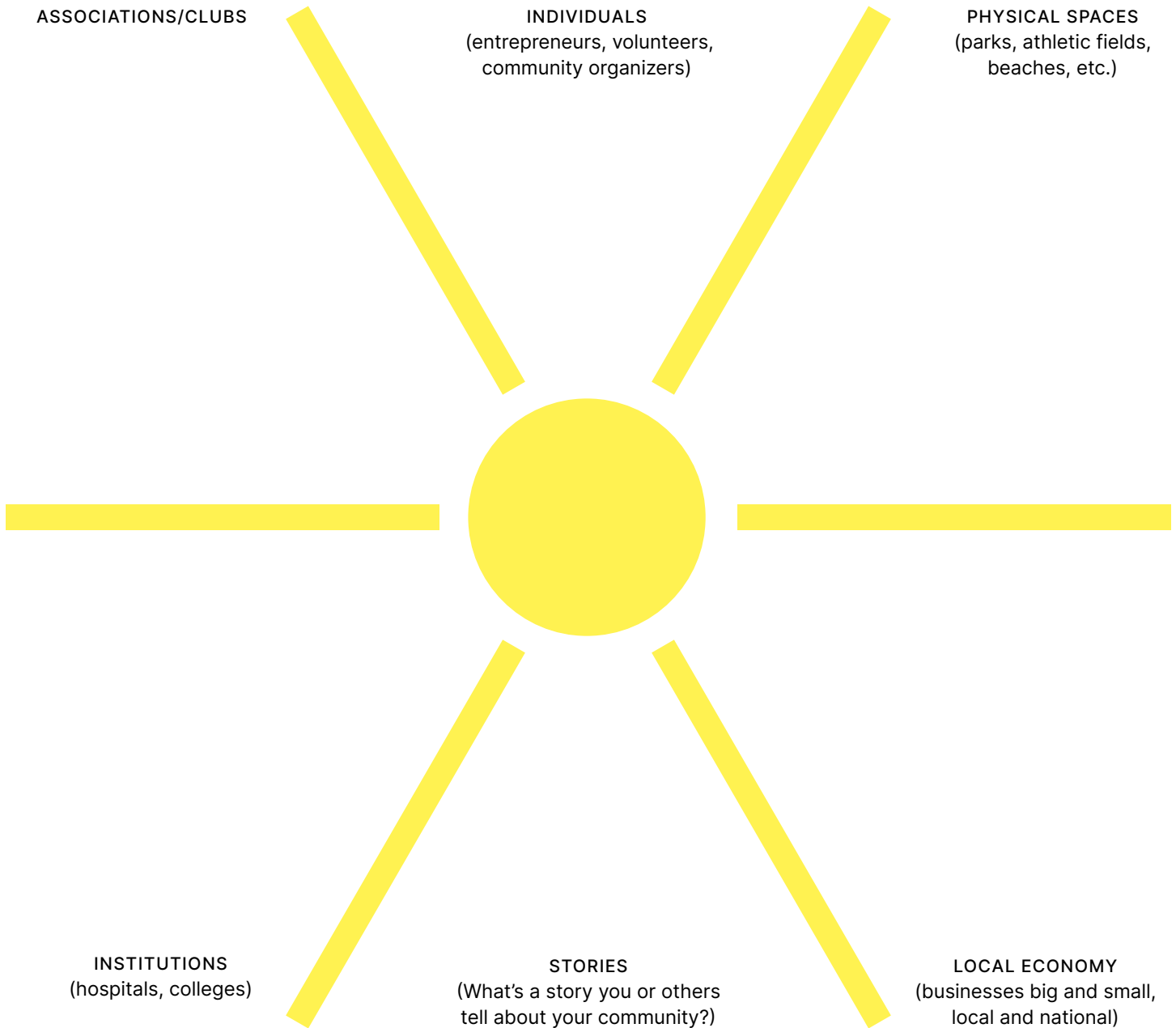


As you get started thinking about building relationships in support of equity-based summer services, watch [An Introvert's Guide to Networking](#).

While this video from TEDx Portland is for an audience of startup employees, the ideas presented relate directly to the relationship building you want to do in order to build equity-based summer services. As you watch the video start to think about the dots you can collect and the connections you can make between dots.

YOUR TURN: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS BRAINSTORM

Use this sheet as a starting point. Fill in your library in the middle. In the spaces radiating outward, write in potential relationships and partnerships. Think big and small. There are no wrong answers. Everything and everyone is a possibility. All of the people and places you include on your sun map are strengths you can connect with to build equity-based summer services.



Adapted from the Urban Libraries Council. Engaged Library Report.

Asset Mapping and Relationship Building

Now that you've started identifying the strengths available in your community, you can bring that knowledge to building equity-based services. One way to do this is asset mapping. The idea of an asset map is to look at different aspects of your community to learn about and keep track of the people, places, organizations, and so on that you may connect with in order to better understand the strengths of those you serve. Asset maps may take different forms including Google maps or Excel spreadsheets. Get started with asset mapping and relationship building by following the steps below (remember you don't need to do these steps on your own; join with a colleague or community members as you build your asset map and start your relationship building):

See how these libraries did it.

[Santa Barbara Asset Map using Excel](#)

[San Diego County Library Asset Map using Google Maps](#)

- **Brainstorm** a list of businesses, parks, hospitals, community organizations, people, etc. in the area that you would like to learn more about. Think big and not just who you already might have connections with. For example, think about barbershops and other small businesses, entrepreneurs and sole proprietors, hobbyists and advocates. Ask who is working with or might represent systemically marginalized youth and families. Who might you want to talk with in order to learn about strengths in the community. Be specific: instead of just writing hospitals, list the names of the hospitals, the names of the small businesses, the names of the entrepreneurs, and so on.
- **Drive or walk around the area** you would like to learn more about and look closely at who and what is represented there. What do you see in terms of businesses, organizations, schools, faith-based organizations, ethnic and cultural institutions, entrepreneurship, etc.?
- **Place the different people, places, organizations, etc. that you uncover on a map.** You can use Google maps or another mapping tool. Add notes to each item to highlight the reason you are adding it to the map and include everyone you know who has a relationship with those added to the map. The relationship could be between you and someone or another staff member or someone outside of the library. Take a look at the map you created. **What does it tell you about what's going on** in your community for and with systemically marginalized youth, families, and adults? What would you like to learn more about? Who would you like to talk with? Make sure to ask questions of the data to help in your learning.
- **Make a plan** for learning more about what you see on the map as assets. **Use your map as a jumping off point** for building equity-based summer services.

SAMPLES: community focused and strength-based questions for conversations.

What's a day in your life like – from a professional and/or community perspective?

What would you like others to know about the work you do and/or the community overall?

You interact with the community regularly. What are the problems you are hearing about at this very moment?

What interventions do you think will help solve that problem?

Who is working with those in our community to solve these problems, and how?

What do you see as the benefits of living or working in our community?

What is your vision for our community?



How can we get to know more community connectors/assets like you that can share youth and family needs with me?

Who in the community is working with the youth population and what kinds of services are they providing?

How have you worked to help systemically marginalized youth and families in our community?

What's your favorite thing about summer in our community?

What is your vision for systemically marginalized youth and families in our community?



What is a project you have had in mind for our community (or in your work) that you have not been able to get off the ground? What do you think it would take to get that project off the ground?

Add your own questions here.

Once you have had your conversation with the community connector/asset, reflect on what you learned about the community and consider how you might continue to build the relationship in support of equity-based summer services.

What surprised you about what you learned through your conversations?

What do you think you can focus on soon (or even right away) to integrate what you learned into summer services? And, what more would you like to learn?

Who else would you like to talk with?

What's the next step you would like to take to build equity-based summer relationships?

Getting Started in Equity Communications

When just getting started in equity work, conversations about equity can be frightening and challenging. That’s why it’s useful to start having those conversations with people you trust already and have a relationship with, and then as your confidence builds expand your conversation radius to include those outside your colleague cohort and talk with administrators, community members, and so on. As you think about gaining practice in these conversations, remember the what, how, and why of these engagements:

The What

Seek to bring understanding that moves to action

Ask us to hold many perspectives and ways of being, doing, and engaging

Pave the way toward more just, transformed, liberated systems and programs

Center justness and support the work of moving us toward healing, transformation, and liberation

When coupled with actions, ask us to hold ‘and’

When coupled with actions, ask us to look at self, community, systems, policies, procedures

The Why

To encourage services that authentically reflect community needs and wants

To interrupt systems of oppression by learning, connecting, and affirming

To promote healing

To move closer to justness, transformation, and liberation

The How

With intention and authentic desire to learn, grow, (re)imagine

With compassion, grace, wonder, curiosity

With as many folks as possible

As best as possible, with shared understanding of language

With appreciation

Holding and using reflection as a tool

With awareness of our own biases and when they often arise.

With awareness of our connection to and with systems of oppression and the ways this can impact how we show up and engage.

Remember that equity-based communications:

Are not rushed—they are a process and sometimes need scaffolding

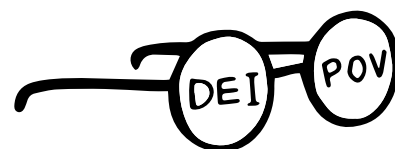
Are not one and done

Ask us to hold many perspectives

Ask us to continue to hold our “why”

Ask us to be comfortable with discomfort

Are necessary at every level of thinking and engaging: program structure, budget, etc.





Co-Designing with Community

The co-design process gives you an opportunity to learn with and from others to build equitable summer services that are community-based. As described in [Library Staff as Public Servants](#), “Using co-design techniques democratizes the design of services by equalizing the power dynamics between multiple community assets, making everyone involved equal partners in the design of programs and services (Druin, 2002; Harrington et al, 2019). Co-design emphasizes **designing with community** members and **not designing for them.**”

The co-design process includes:

- Coming up with a design goal. What do the co-designers want to achieve based on mutual building equity-based summer services goals. For example, a goal might be, “To design and implement, with a group of community members, stakeholders, and organizations, summer services that are equity-based.”
- Decide the activities the group will work on in order to reach the goal. There are a variety of techniques and activities that might be used. What is selected should be determined by the experience of the co-designers and the goal. [Learn more about co-design techniques.](#)
- Facilitation of co-design sessions so that each session builds on what was learned during the previous sessions. Each session will lead to themes and ideas that should be considered for follow-up sessions.

The number of co-design sessions held is determined by the goal the group is working towards. Following each session the co-facilitators of the sessions must reflect on what was learned and use that information in designing the next session.

Using co-design techniques democratizes the design of services by equalizing the power dynamics between multiple community assets, making everyone involved equal partners in the design of programs and services...”

Connecting with Community to Share Power

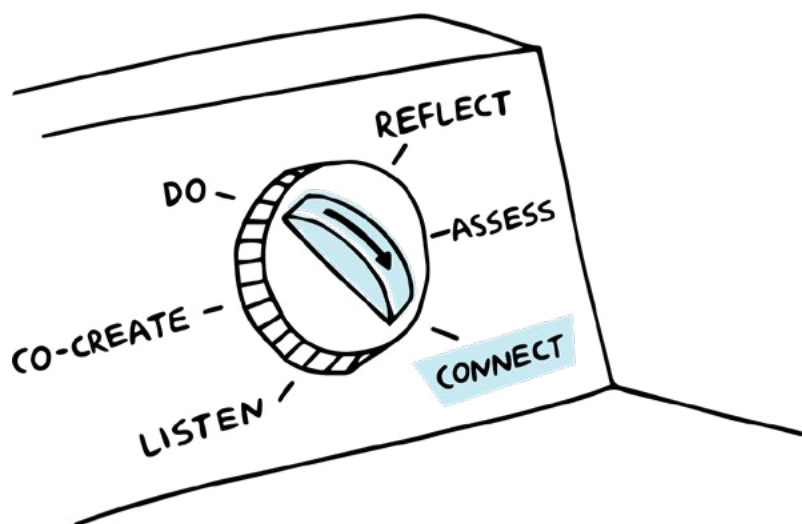
Building equity-based summer services requires that library staff give up control and share power with others in the community. Releasing control empowers those that are a part of different groups to design summer services that leverage known assets and that help to overcome real challenges faced by youth, families, and adults.

With your asset map in hand, you are able to begin to recognize the skills and knowledge of others in the community and use that recognition as an opportunity to bring those assets into equitable summer service planning and design.

Remember that perceptions of power come in a variety of forms. Library staff may be seen to have power because they work in an educational institution or have a certain level of education. When bringing in community voices you want to focus on being equal partners in the work of building equitable summer services and breaking down perceived (or real) power sharing barriers.

This means that library staff:

- Must give up control of decision-making related to what summer services must include and allow community members who have knowledge and skills outside of the library to engage in that decision-making and service implementation.
- Must bring people together to co-design what summer services will look like. [Learn more about co-design.](#)
- Are transparent about challenges they may face in building equitable summer services.



As you begin to think about how you can share power with community members and stakeholders for the building of equitable summer services, reflect on the following:

How does the perception of my or the library's power have an impact on those I might work with?

What do I need to do to bring community voices into equitable summer services decision-making?

What questions do I need to have answered before I can move forward with power sharing in support of equity-based summer services?

Additional thoughts and notes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The BEBS team would like to thank and acknowledge the work of the library staff who joined and inspired us during the first two years of the initiative. The materials on this website are a direct result of their openness to difficult conversations and vulnerability.

Years 1 and 2 participating libraries:

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Alameda County Library | San Diego County Library |
| Altadena Library District | San Diego Public Library |
| Arcadia Public Library | San Jose Public Library |
| City of Commerce Public Library | Santa Barbara Public Library |
| City of Santa Maria Public Library | Solano Public Library |
| Kern County Library | Tehama County Library |
| Los Angeles Public Library | Torrance Public Library |
| Madera County Library | Tulare County Library |
| Redwood City Library | Yolo County Library |
| Sacramento Public Library | |

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